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Common Ground Publishing Corp.
204-4381 Fraser St.
Vancouver, BC V5V 4G4 Canada

100% owned and operated by Canadians.
Published 12 times a year in Canada.

Publications Mail Agreement No. 40011171
Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to
Circulation Dept. 204-4381 Fraser St.
Vancouver, BC V5V 4G4
ISSN No. 0824-0698

Copies printed: 72,000
Over 250,000 readers per issue
Survey shows 3 to 4 readers/copy
Plus online at www.commonground.ca

Annual subscription is $60 (US$50) for one year (12 issues). Single issues are $6 (specify issue #). Payable by cheque, Visa, MasterCard, Interac or money order.

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Heart Health

"There is a vitality, a life force, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium …"
- Martha Graham, dancer.

We need courage to celebrate our self and our relationships. May we be inspired to take action on the issues close to our heart.

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Ken Larsen

Act now to save the Canadian Wheat Board

Or face the end of food sovereignty in Canada

While the popular media is full of stories of globalization and its corrosive effects on local communities, most are unaware of the back-story when it comes to the Canadian Wheat Board. In the grain trade, globalization is not a new story. In fact, it pre-dates the settling of Canada's west by over half a century. The Wheat Board was a uniquely constructive and successful response to globalization created in Canada's west.

By the time our grandfathers and grandmothers were settling homesteads to grow wheat on the prairies in the early 1900s, the global grain market was already a mature, fully globalized market dominated by just five giant corporations. These privately owned companies, mutations of which still operate today and still control 80% of the tradable grain on the planet, were connected to international commodity markets and the world's grain growing areas by the telegraph. Through the telegraph, stocks were traded and grain prices set instantaneously around the globe. Faced with these giant grain companies, western farmers found they were powerless to negotiate a fair price for their crops. Farmers saw the idea of collective bargaining through a single-desk Wheat Board as a way to have market power through cooperation and thereby get a fair price.

It was not until 1920s that the first Wheat Board was created. An agricultural depression began at the end of WWI and by 1920 speculation had essentially frozen the futures market pushing the international price of wheat to near zero. The west's farmers faced financial ruin. Under strong pressure, Ottawa created the first Canadian Wheat Board to bypass the dysfunctional private market. This Board acted as the collective sales agent for the west's farmers. It sold the crop in an orderly manner directly to customers bypassing speculators and the private trade. The Board was very successful at getting fair prices and was immensely popular among the west's grain farmers.

Under pressure from private trade, then Prime Minister Arthur Meighen's Conservative government removed the first single-desk CWB in August 1920. Prices in the west promptly collapsed and Canadian grain flooded into the US. To protect their own farmers, the US closed its border to Canadian grain and cattle in May of 1921. In response, Canadian farmers used their Wheat Pool cooperatives to set up a Central Selling Agency (CSA) in an attempt to create another wheat board. However, without government support they did not have the single-desk mandate needed to create the conditions for true orderly marketing to keep prices stable. Western farmers also defeated every Conservative MP in the west in 1921 and continued to lobby for the return of the single-desk Wheat Board.

By 1935, times were so desperate Conservative Prime Minister R. B. Bennett (a former railway company lawyer from Calgary) finally listened to farmers and passed the Canadian Wheat Board Act. Farmers continued pushing for the federal government to take the last step and proclaim the single-desk provision in the Canadian Wheat Board Act. Mackenzie King's government finally did so in 1943, a little over 22 years after farmers lost their first Wheat Board and more than 43 years since farmers first began lobbying for a single-desk. The initial price for wheat set by the single-desk CWB was $1.25 per bushel, five cents above the private market. The single-desk was supported by all the Wheat Pools and every major farm group in the west. The single-desk finally gave farmers full control over their grain from the farm gate to the customer; the barriers of the private trade had finally been broken.

Monsanto and other biotech companies started a process to introduce genetically modified (GM) wheat into Canada, the US and Australia. After consulting its foreign and domestic customers, the CWB opposed the introduction on the basis GM wheat was non-salable – nobody wanted to eat it. Ultimately, the proposal was withdrawn in Canada, but it is still in process in the US...

In 1998, amendments to the Canadian Wheat Board Act enabled farmers to elect 10 out of the 15 members of the Board of Directors. The CWB, which had always been farmer-owned, was now fully farmer-controlled. In every CWB election, 8 of the 10 directors have supported the CWB's single-desk. The new directors took an aggressive role when it came to protecting farmers' interests.

In an attempt to undermine the farmer-controlled organization, the two foreign owned railways slowed grain shipments to the coast during 1996 and 1997 costing farmers money for tardy delivery and lost sales. The CWB responded by successfully suing the two railways, winning $15 million in compensation from CP Rail and an undisclosed amount from CN Rail in 1999.

More significantly, Monsanto and other biotech companies started a process to introduce genetically modified (GM) wheat into Canada, the US and Australia. After consulting its foreign and domestic customers, the CWB opposed the introduction on the basis GM wheat was non-salable – nobody wanted to eat it. Ultimately, the proposal was withdrawn in Canada, but it is still in process in the US and is being re-introduced into Australia now that the Australian Wheat Board, which functioned similarly to the CWB, has been removed.

Trouble had been brewing since 1989 when Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney arbitrarily removed oats from the Wheat Board. Private interests persuaded Mulroney to remove oats in the middle of the crop year, creating a $32 million deficit when the Board's inventory plunged in value – a deficit that amounted to a windfall for private trade. Brian Mulroney went on to sit on the Board of Directors of Archer Daniels Midland (ADM), one of the five giant grain companies.

It was not long before other private groups were demanding the Wheat Board stop selling durum wheat, used for pasta, so they could process it on the prairies. Not unreasonably, farmers asked why they should effectively subsidize a private business by providing cheap grain. Coincidentally, in 1997, the National Citizens Coalition (NCC) found itself with generous funding to allow its then vice-president and later president, Stephen Harper, to attack the legitimacy of the Board with print and radio advertisements across western Canada. Farmers asked where the NCC was getting the funding for these efforts but Mr. Harper remained tight lipped.

Later, farmers again raised questions when the Commons Ethics Committee hearings held in 2007 heard testimony that former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and Karlheinz Schreiber had a business arrangement in 1993, which Schreiber at least contended included pasta. Mulroney contended the arrangement was legitimate and private, created later based on a special position he took on the Board of Archer Daniels Midland.

Ten years before the hearings, in October of 1996 ADM was fined $100 million in the US for price fixing and two subsequent books based on those court cases documented how ADM financed farmers and other groups to advance its business interests in grain processing. Naturally, Canadian farmers wanted to know if the Mulroney-Schreiber pasta business included financing the NCC's attacks on their Wheat Board.

By this time, Stephen Harper was Prime Minister. In November 2007, he appointed David Johnston, now our Governor General, then president of the University of Waterloo, to recommend a course of action. Johnston's January 2008 report recommended conducting a commission of inquiry restricted to deal-

continued p.34...

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Briefing Notes on Prescription Drugs

Educating doctors

Big gaps in knowledge about drug costs and efficacy

A few years ago, I was invited to be the guest on an Ottawa radio talk show, the topic being something I was well familiar with, a book I co-wrote called *Selling Sickness*. The book explores how the pharmaceutical industry influences regulators, physicians and patients in order to sell its treatments.

On this occasion, Steve, the show's host, invited the station's "house doctor" to join us. Barry, a local doctor, had his own program at that station and it soon became startlingly clear I was about to be tag-teamed. After warming me up, Barry came to the point: "How could you possibly insinuate that physicians were under the influence of pharmaceutical sales reps?" These are the salespeople working for drug companies that make personal visits to doctors, dropping off samples and otherwise 'educating' our physicians about new drugs. "I'm offended that you think we physicians can be so easily bamboozled by sales reps," he spat out.

Pinned against the turnbuckles, I turned to the radio host and asked, "Steve do you own any shares in pharmaceutical companies, maybe have pharma stocks in your mutual fund portfolio?"

"Sure I do," he said. "Well, Steve, you're wasting your money," I said. "You know, those companies spend upwards of $2 billion per year marketing their drugs to Canadian doctors; most of that goes to drug reps. So, Steve, if those drug rep visits ain't having any influence on doctors, then you've made a poor investment. If Dr. Barry is right, pharma's marketing model ain't working."

They both sputtered a bit. C'mon guys. Reality check. Does an industry this successful and this powerful invest in things that don't work? Of course not; pharma has lots of high octane brains to invest its money where it produces the greatest return. Period. If it's in pizza or pens, delivered by smiling drug reps, then that's where the money's going.

Barbara Mintzes, an epidemiologist at UBC's Department of Anaesthesiology, Pharmacology and Therapeutics knows a thing or two about drug marketing, having studied the advertising and marketing activities of the drug industry for nearly two decades: "We know from the research that sales representatives, also known as 'drug detailers', have a big influence on doctors' prescribing," she says. "They often have much more influence than doctors realize. If doctors aren't getting the full story [about a drug], if most of the time they hear nothing about side effects or about rare, more serious harmful effects, how can they make sure they're prescribing safely?"

When I asked a friend, a former sales rep in Nova Scotia, he said: "Hmm, 'good safety profile', is about all we'd say about safety. Basically, unless they [the doctors] ask, we don't bring up the topic."

It's easy to see why drug sales people are effective. Generally, they are polite, engaging and extremely good at reading people, trained to focus on the positive of their products and driven to do whatever is needed to get doctors to write their prescriptions.

Some physicians won't see drug reps, but a 2006 survey found about two-thirds of doctors in BC see reps at least once a month and 42 percent of BC's GPs get visited several times a week. Many doctors like the free drug samples. More than one doctor has told me that's the only reason he sees reps. The samples are always the newest and usually the most expensive drugs on the market.

Worries about how drug reps might be biasing prescribers led researchers to think about providing doctors unbiased or academic sources of information. Thus, the concept of counter-detailing or "academic detailing" was born. The Granddaddy of this movement is Dr. Jerry Avorn, a physician and professor of medi-

cine at Harvard Medical School. His 2004 book *Powerful Medicines* reflected on the thinking behind it: "If the pharmaceutical industry could change doctors' prescribing patterns this way to increase sales, why couldn't the same method be used to improve the appropriateness of drug use?"

That's a very good question and he and his colleague Steve Soumerai set out to prove academic detailing could do what it purported to do: provide a lifeline to physicians swimming in a sea of pharmaceutical marketing spin. More than 25 years later, academic detailing programs are in place in many parts of North America, but they have hardly any effect on medical practice.

Why? Well, for one, it's hard to change prescribing. As Dr. Avorn notes, it's not easy to get "evidence-based, unbiased clinical knowledge" to supplant other types of information based on "tradition, superstition or mainly commercial agendas."

The second reason is size: there are probably 100 drug sales reps for every one academic detailer in Canada. The academic side of things is simply outgunned. Despite good research that academic detailing can improve prescribing, there is little public investment in it. The first program started in Canada was here in BC, a single detailer based out of Lions Gate Hospital in North Vancouver. That program has grown to about 10 academic detailers covering the whole province and there are also well-established programs in Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan. However, the big provinces of Ontario and Quebec aren't even in the game, with the exception of a program in Hamilton. Alberta had a program but it was cut. Manitoba's program is on life support.

The third reason, and this is my own conclusion, is that no one has made a powerful enough business case for academic detailing.

A duo of ex-pharma detailers in Atlantic Canada, who call their company Prescribed Solutions have an answer. They know the selling game well and their pragmatic approach is to visit doctors armed with drug cost-effectiveness information and teach doctors how to improve generic prescribing so that both patients and drug plans can get good drug therapy and save money.

These Atlantic Canada entrepreneurs understand that one of the most important bits of information doctors need (other than drug safety information) is comparative cost information of the drugs they prescribe. Basically, if there are 10 drugs in a class that all do the same thing, why would a doctor prescribe the most expensive brand, which could be three times the price of the proven generic? A major gap in our physicians' knowledge is the price of drugs and prescribing an affordable drug can have huge implications on whether a person gets a script filled.

A study out last month by UBC researchers shows patients will avoid a trip to the pharmacy if they don't think they can afford them. And for many essential drugs, that can be decidedly bad for your health.

If drug reps schmoozing in doctors' offices are trying to get new customers through free samples and evidence exists that academic detailing is effective, leading to safer, more cost-effective use of drugs, why haven't governments or employers – who pay for your private drug benefits – embraced it?

Because they haven't done the math. For every one percent increase in the generic use of drugs in Canada, the private payers – those with drug coverage through the employer – save over $100 million. If Canadians used generics at the same rate as Americans, it is estimated we'd shave about $2 billion per year off our drug bill. This is not small potatoes.

Is any kind of counter-detailing even on the radar of most politicians or union executives? As far as I can tell, the only politician I've heard asking for more investments in academic detailing is BC's NDP leader Adrian Dix. I think he might be on to something.

If provincial governments are all about creating jobs, let's provide jobs to the many pharma reps out of work due to the recent economic slowdown. Let's put them on the public payroll and get them to spread the word about drug safety and cost effectiveness to our physicians.

It is time to undo the love affair between drug companies and doctors and start building some new relationships where patients can all benefit. #

Alan Cassels is a drug policy researcher at the University of Victoria and author of the forthcoming book **Seeking Sickness: Medical Screening and the Misguided Hunt for Disease,** due out April 2012.

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Nutrispeak Vesanto Melina, MS, RD

Chocolate for healthy hearts

What can be better than a sweet treat with health benefits? As it happens, our favourite February food, chocolate, has a few glowing characteristics. It comes from the Theobroma cacao tree, from a bean that grows on that tropical tree. (Theobroma means "food for the Gods.") Chocolate originated in Mexico and Central and South America, but West Africa now produces most of the world's cocoa. Look for fair trade chocolate that meets environmental and labour standards at natural foods markets in Kitsilano and the West End, at Karmavore in New Westminster and at Nature's Fare Markets throughout the province.

Dark or semisweet chocolate is typically a vegan product. Because chocolate contains antioxidants that inhibit the oxidation of LDL (bad) cholesterol, it has gained a reputation of being beneficial for our heart health. Eaten in moderation, chocolate may lower blood pressure.

Chocolate is also a source of iron – a "precious metal" when it comes to human health. As part of red blood cells, iron plays a central role in transporting oxygen to the body and carrying away the metabolic waste product carbon dioxide. Each day, we lose tiny amounts of iron in cells that are sloughed from skin and the inner lining of the intestine. If our intake is insufficient to replenish our losses, a tired feeling and sensitivity to cold may develop. With further depletion, people feel exhausted, irritable, lethargic and develop headaches; the skin may appear pale. Since iron deficiency is such a prevalent condition and easily diagnosed, if you have any doubts about your iron status, have a lab test done.

We are efficient at recycling iron, however, losses must be replaced. Iron-rich foods include beans, nuts, seeds, whole grains, dried fruit and chocolate. Two of the Almond Butter Balls in the recipe below will provide one quarter of the recommended intake of eight mg iron for the day. Women of childbearing age need more iron so they can double the recommendation.

Almond Butter Balls

Makes 30 balls

These nut butter balls are an ideal snack for outdoor adventures such as skiing, hiking, riding or climbing. They are light, take up little space and provide energy. Four of these balls can fuel a person weighing 150 pounds on an uphill hike for five miles (eight kilometres). This recipe is from our new book *Cooking Vegetarian*, which I co-authored with J. Forest. (Wiley Canada, 2011.)

- 1 cup rolled oats
- 1 cup almond butter or peanut butter
- 1/2 cup pumpkin seeds
- 1/2 cup currants
- 1/2 cup dried cranberries, chopped
- 1/2 cup non-dairy chocolate chips
- 1/2 tsp. lemon rind
- 1 tbs. freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1 tsp. cinnamon powder
- 1/2 tsp. cardamom
- 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1-2 tbs. water

Put the rolled oats in the bowl of a food processor and process for 20 seconds or until they are finely ground. Transfer the oats to a medium bowl along with the nut butter, pumpkin seeds, currants, cranberries, chocolate chips, lemon rind, lemon juice, cinnamon, cardamom and vanilla extract. Mix with a fork until all ingredients are well incorporated. Add enough water to hold the mixture together. Roll into small balls, about two tablespoons in size and store in a covered container in the refrigerator or freezer.

I enjoy meeting you Common Ground readers. On **January 28**, come and chat about food and nutrition at Wendel's bookstore and cafe in Fort Langley and in downtown Langley at Nature's Fare on **March 3**. These are free events. Another favourite location for sweet treats is Karmavore. www.karmavore.ca

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Save seeds, protect diversity

The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago. – Chinese Proverb

I often reflect on this wise proverb when thinking about the grassroots community seed shows we introduced to the West Coast over 20 years ago. The intention was to educate people on the imperative of preserving plant genetic diversity through seed saving, but in an interactive participatory and fun manner. Seedy Saturdays are non-profit, public seed swaps held across Canada, organized by individuals and community groups that see a need for gardeners, seed companies, nurseries, gardening organizations, historic sites and community groups to exchange ideas and purchase or swap seeds and plants.

Attendees are able to contribute, not just consume. At the heart of each show is the seed exchange. The number of events increases every year, with over 100 held across the country in 2011. Boasting 2,400 attendees last year, the Qualicum Beach Seedy Saturday has become a major community event since its inauguration 10 years ago. The same holds true for most shows I attend; there are now waiting lists for vendors and exhibitors and they have grown in attendance each year. This phenomenon instills in me the reassurance that, at the end of the day, people power will overcome adversity. (www.qbseedysaturday.com)

Seeds of Diversity is Canada's grassroots solution to protecting plant genetic heritage. The 2012 Member Seed Directory boasts 3,500 varieties of vegetable, fruit, grain, herb and flower seeds, saved by 120 Seeds of Diversity members and made available for sale or trade. They have compiled a list of online resources to identify sources of Canadian, heritage, organic or other hard-to-find seeds. (www.gardenlist.com) Cyndi's Catalog of Garden Catalogues lists over 2,000 mail-order gardening catalogues in the US and Canada and provides ratings for quality, service, price and breadth of varieties.

It's encouraging to know that many community groups involved in food security issues have understood the need to include seed saving amongst their activities. People are gathering together to share these little miracles of life in their neighbourhoods and organizations and starting local seed banks to secure their ability to grow food in the future.

What a relief this is, as Monsanto tightens its grip on ownership and control of food seeds around the globe. My greatest concern is that genetically modified seeds are cross-pollinating with wild species, making it impossible to fully clean up our contaminated gene pool. Thousands of years of careful plant domestication is being threatened forever by the irresponsible actions of a corporation bending the laws of nature, creating havoc in the fields and compromising the ability of future generations to feed themselves.

Let's bring the food back home, rebuild sustainable agricultural systems and put the next generation of farmers to work to mend the destruction we are now witnessing. To organize your own Seedy Saturday, contact mail@seeds.ca for helpful information and free promotion on the Seeds of Diversity website. For a full listing of 2012 events, visit www.seeds.ca/ev/events.php

Carolyn Herriot grows "Seeds of Victoria" at the Garden Path Centre in Victoria, BC. http://earthfuture.com/gardenpath She is author of **The Zero Mile Diet: A Year-round Guide to Growing Organic Food** (Harbour Publishing).

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Enzyme supplements safe & effective

Enzyme supplements have been sold for over 50 years without incident. I have been writing about and prescribing various digestive enzyme supplements successfully for over 30 years. These over the counter products are manufactured by at least a dozen different companies and are sold in health food stores, supermarkets and pharmacies. The manufacturers include NAKA, Biotics Research, Natural Factors, SISU, Platinum Naturals, Thorne Research, Metagenics, AOR, Integra, New Roots and Professional Health.

I estimate that, in the past 30 years, I have prescribed enzymes to over 5,000 patients for anywhere between a few weeks to several years. About 20 percent of my patients have been taking digestive enzymes for over 10 years without any side effects.

While potential side effects have been documented with digestive enzymes, I have seen only minor nuisance side effects – gas, indigestion, constipation – that usually cleared with continued use of the product. Approximately one percent of my patients could not tolerate the enzymes and side effect symptoms disappeared upon stopping the product. Compared to most drugs on the market, my experience has been that digestive enzymes are significantly safer than most over the counter cough and cold remedies.

In fact, while there are many documented deaths from over the counter Tylenol, I am unaware of any deaths from digestive enzymes. I refer you to a recent publication on natural supplement safety in the USA (Bronstein et al) where they report zero deaths occurring with digestive enzyme use. *See the reference at the end of this article. Surely, if enzyme safety were an issue of any significance it would have been reported in this exhaustive study.

In general, I have found various types of digestive enzymes – pancreatin, serrapeptase, bromelain, papain, other plant enzymes, betaine and pepsin hydrochloride – extremely effective to reverse chronic gastrointestinal problems. These include diarrhea, gas, bloating, constipation, inflammatory bowel disease, food allergies, irritable bowel syndrome, micronutrient malabsorption, diverticulitis and diverticulosis.

I have also found that digestive enzymes will reduce the severity of inflammation just about anywhere in the body, especially in the joints (arthritis), the tendons (tendonitis) and the bursa (bursitis). I also find them to be highly effective in speeding healing from just about any sports injury.

Some of my pancreatic cancer patients have also found that taking digestive enzymes reduces the severity of their pain and discomfort and allows them to eat a more complete diet, thereby prolonging their survival.

The evidence in support of digestive enzymes can be found in thousands of published studies. A number of these studies are referenced at the end of the online version of this article. Please see www.commonground.ca

*www.aapcc.org/dnn/Portals/0/2010%20NPDS%20Annual%20Report.pdf

Zoltan Rona is a licensed medical doctor in Ontario. He has been in private practice for over 33 years. He specializes in complementary and integrative medicine and has written 11 books on the subject, including **Vitamin D: The Sunshine Vitamin** (Alive Books, 2010). He also holds a Master degree in biochemistry and clinical nutrition. zoltan78@bellnet.ca, www.mydoctor.ca/drzoltanrona

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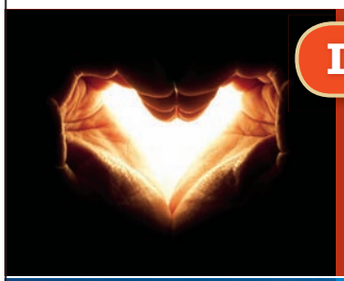

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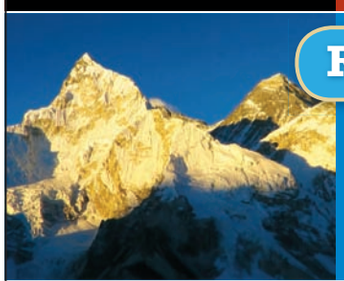

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Reconnecting with body wisdom

For many of us, our body remains a largely untapped resource because we have forgotten how to listen to the healing messages of our body. By learning to reconnect with our body's wisdom, we can tap into the healing resources of emotion, sensation, intuition, imagery, memory and mystery. The awakened sense of wholeness that results from this mind-body connection helps to activate our immune system and promote healing. Research has shown that healing modalities such as meditation, relaxation techniques, yoga and visualization all facilitate this mind-body connection and support immune system functions.

Visualization affects our health

It has been demonstrated through research that visualization of exercise increases muscle mass and strength almost as much as exercise itself. One particular study examined cleaning staff who were measured on physiological health variables affected by exercise. When informed about the health benefits of their work (i.e. physical activity), the participants lost body fat, decreased their blood pressure and increased their lean muscle mass even through their activity levels didn't change. This helps to demonstrate that what we think and what we feel directly affects our health.

The powerful potential of the mind-body connection is illustrated by the placebo effect –sustained treatment response to a 'fake' treatment such as a sugar pill. This has been well documented for a wide variety of illnesses and treatments. Our mind is a powerful tool in assisting our healing.

Touch is an important element

Massage and other modalities such as therapeutic touch, reflexology and acupressure can facilitate and deepen our body-mind awareness and connection. With the guidance of a healing practitioner, trained in one or more of these modalities, we can begin to reconnect with our own body and our own inner guidance.

Although these techniques and modalities enhance the mind-body connection, simply listening to and honouring what your body is telling you, is all that is required to begin this reconnection. For example, fatigue is by far the most common symptom of people with cancer. From the perspective of integrative medicine, fatigue is our body's way of telling us to rest and to take care of ourselves. It is important to feel our energy levels, listen to what our body is telling us and adjust our activities accordingly.

As we quiet our mind and deepen the intimate connection with our body, we can begin to listen with greater awareness to what our body is telling us. Listen to this wisdom and use this information to guide your healing journey.

Foundations of healing

All aspects of supporting mind, body, spirit and immune system – exercise, nutrition, stress reduction, etc. – are interrelated and each contributes to the benefit provided by the others in a synergistic way. By engaging in the many ways we can support mind, body and spirit, we create solid foundations for health and recovery and optimize our body's healing potential.

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LETTERS

Rancher responds

In the November 2011 issue of *Common Ground*, under the all-important header of "Health," you [Vesanto Melina] write about bone, muscle and kidney health. Up to last November, your Nutrispeak columns have not impressed me enough to prompt me to comment, however, this has now changed. I am very much made of flesh and blood and I do not have to accept ink like paper must – silently lying down. So finally, and with much conviction, I claim that your Nutrispeak is balderdash.

You state the consequences of eating meat, dairy products and grains can include kidney damage, muscle wasting and possibly the dissolution of bone. When experts like yourself use the words "may," "can" and "possibly" in your expert statements, you effectively instill doubt and fear in the reader, while conveniently leaving the back door unlocked to escape from the truth. You see, most plant materials cannot be well digested by us without being accompanied by animal fats. Why do you think our instinct, via our taste buds, tells us to melt plenty of butter on cooked vegetables?

photo © Kurt

Each and every nut and seed harbours toxins within to keep from being eaten so they can fulfill their purpose in life. Nuts should only be consumed after they have been fermented in water with sea salt for at least 24 hours to get rid of most of the toxins, and then dried.

Using questionable science for a crutch, you continue limping through a *parcours* meant to be navigated by authority. One of the most wonderful creations of God is the ruminant animal with its four stomachs. It can do, absolutely beautifully, what we humans cannot do: it can digest cellulose, the building blocks of plants. However, God provided us with teeth, a digestive system and the focus to harvest these grass-finished animals either directly, providing us with their highly nutrient dense flesh and organ meats, or indirectly, by gifting us with the wonders of raw dairy products, all of which are understood and welcomed by our bodies. I suggest you read up on Dr. Natasha Campbell-McBride (http://www.gaps.me/), the best of only a handful of medical doctors worldwide, who understands human nutrition. The Weston A. Price Foundation people (www.westonaprice.org) do a powerful job in educating the public, professionals and even the experts on wholesome food.

Being a cowboy, I appreciate a good working dog, know a good horse when I ride it and I can tell a healthy cow. Please do allow me to suggest one more thing: Do yourself a favour and sip a cup of bone broth before every meal; it is highly detoxifying and it will keep you from contracting osteoporosis as you grow longer in the tooth. *Bon appétit*, to your health and *ciao*.

– Felix Schellenberg, long-time rancher on the Chilcotin Plateau of our "Beautiful British Columbia."

ForestEthics stands up for common sense

ForestEthics has never received a bigger compliment. Surprisingly, it came in the form of an ominous and threatening public statement from Canada's Minister of Natural Resources, Joe Oliver. Our work to protect pristine wildlife by challenging the Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline and Tanker project has been so effective that Minister Oliver called us, along with our allies, "radicals that seek to hijack the [Canadian] regulatory system to achieve [our] radical ideo- *continued p.27...*

Resolutions for life

Seven simple steps to better health

If you could gain a decade or more of healthy years to your life, wouldn't you grab the chance? "It's the simple things that can make the biggest difference," says Heart and Stroke Foundation lecturer Dr. Clyde Yancy, adding that up to 80 percent of premature heart disease is preventable. His prescription for more quality years of life: follow these seven simple steps to embrace your best health potential.

Get active

Physical activity can be a lifesaver – literally. Inactivity can shave almost four years off a person's expected lifespan. People who are physically inactive are twice as likely to be at risk for heart disease or stroke.

Know and control cholesterol levels

Almost 40 percent of Canadian adults have high blood cholesterol. You can get your numbers on track by making healthy dietary changes, being active 30 to 60 minutes most days, achieving and maintaining a healthy body weight and becoming tobacco-free.

Follow a healthy diet

Healthy eating is one of the most important things you can do to improve your health, yet about half of Canadians don't meet the healthy eating recommendations.

Know and control blood pressure

By knowing and controlling your blood pressure, you can cut your risk of stroke by up to 40 percent and heart attack by up to 25 percent.

Achieve and maintain a healthy weight

Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight is one of the best things you can do for your heart health. Being obese can reduce your life span by almost four years.

Manage diabetes

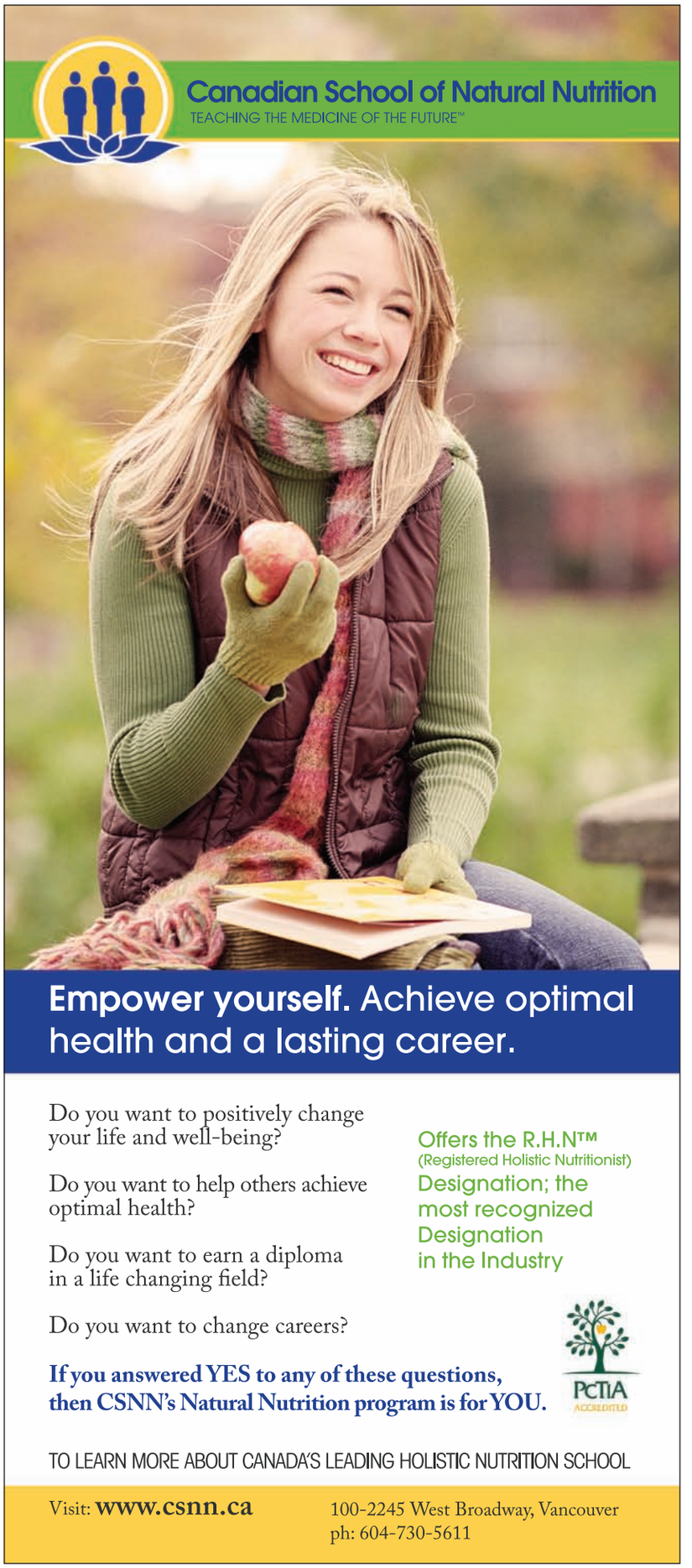
By 2016, an estimated 2.4 million Canadians will live with diabetes. Diabetes increases the risk of high blood pressure, narrowing of the arteries, coronary artery disease and stroke, particularly if your blood sugar levels are poorly controlled.

Be tobacco-free

More than 37,000 Canadians die prematurely each year due to tobacco use and almost 8,000 non-smokers die each year from exposure to second-hand smoke. As soon as you become tobacco-free, your risk of heart disease and stroke begins to decrease. After 15 years, your risk will be nearly that of a non-smoker.

"Healthy living is key to preventing heart disease and stroke," says Bobbe Wood, president of the Heart and Stroke Foundation. "The Foundation is committed to raising awareness about heart health and helping Canadians live longer, healthier lives."

Take a personalized Heart&Stroke Risk Assessment™ to find out how your age, family history and medical conditions affect your heart health. Visit www.heartandstroke.ca/risk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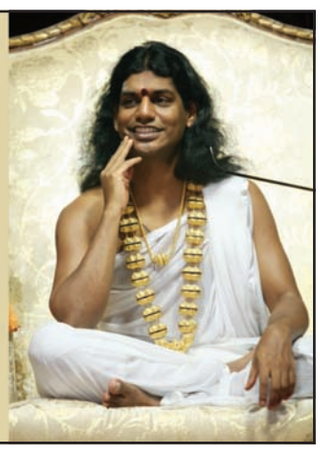

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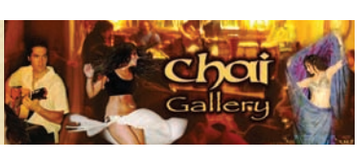


Just now

an interview with Eckhart Tolle

To read Eckhart Tolle's latest column, please see the current print edition of Common Ground. For copyright reasons, we are authorized to publish this column in our print version only.

JR: In your new book, I feel like you're the modern equivalent of the explorers that came to the new world, but an explorer and documenter of consciousness, discovering a new world.

ET: Yes, discovering is the right word. It's not that you need to make a great effort to attain it or bring it about or acquire it. It's discovering it's already there in you – conscious awareness that's obscured, or partially obscured, in many people. It's a discovery of something already there.

It's like waking up after a dream, because identification with the thinking mind and its stories and the old emotional conditioning is like being immersed in a kind of dream world, which very often turns into a nightmare – acting out old conditioned patterns again and again. The whole structure of the egoic mind is an old dysfunction.

There's some evidence that the ego started about 6,000 years ago, but nobody can say for sure. Before that, humans were in a state of innocence. When we go beyond the dysfunction of the ego, we regain our original innocence, but on a much deeper level. This is why Jesus said unless we become as little children we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

So, returning to the original innocence, and at the same time going much deeper into that with full awareness – that's the process. We're coming out of thousands of years of dreadful suffering, almost the whole of recorded history of humanity. If you really look at it in an unbiased way, as if you'd never seen it before, one cannot but admit that, to a large extent, 80 to 90 percent of it is a history of pathological insanity, the suffering that humans have created for themselves and, of course, inflicting it upon others.

JR: And exporting it through colonization to the new world.

ET: Yes, so the important part of the awakening process is the realization of the insanity in human history, collectively, to this day playing itself out in world events. Also, to be aware of the insanity within oneself – old, dysfunctional patterns that come again and again that create suffering. So when you see that you're insane, then you're not completely insane. Sanity comes the moment you realize the fact of insanity. To see insanity is not a negative thing.

JR: At least you're out of denial.

ET: Yes, that's why in the film A Beautiful Mind, for example, which is about a mathematical genius who did have a mental dysfunction, his mind was developed in certain areas but he was also insane. The viewer of the film doesn't know that until a certain point when the character realizes that many of his experiences are delusions. At that moment, his healing begins. He's not cured yet, but his healing begins because he's recognized his own insanity. That recognition can only come out of sanity, which is the awareness of unconditioned consciousness.

JR: I remember you saying before you published your last book that the next one would be about why there isn't peace on this planet. Was finding a solution one of the major intentions of A New Earth?

ET: Yes, to see the nature of the major dysfunction. That's why I talk quite a bit about the ego in this book. We need to recognize the nature of the dysfunction. Sometimes, even very great Eastern teachers sometimes neglect that part because they're not really touched by the magnitude of, especially, the Western ego. So it's very important for us to see the dysfunction so that we can recognize it when it arises.

Part of the new book is about recognizing the ego, which I regard as a semi-autonomous energy. It's an energy field. Every thought you think is an energy field. It has a form and then it dissolves and then there is another form. The ego itself is an energy field and it has a collective and individual aspect. Every indi-

vidual ego is part of the collective. They're connected. Every individual is a manifestation of the collective. To recognize that is essential because the ego, being a very clever entity, has many ways of reappearing. Even if you've seen it in one disguise, it can suddenly reappear in a new one.

You might suddenly realize your whole sense of self, identity, is being derived from your possessions and social position. You see that your whole sense of identity is bound up with that and you recognize one aspect of ego. Well, usually it only comes to people when they suffer, when the identification with something no longer works…

It's recognizing the ego in its many disguises. I've met Buddhist monks who had enormous egos without knowing it. I remember being in a monastery afraid to approach them because they seemed so aloof. Yet I've met other Buddhist monks who were like little children and it was a joy to talk to them because they'd laugh and not take themselves seriously at all. They didn't take the whole Buddhist

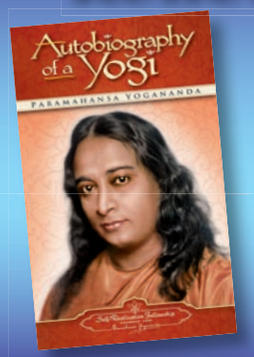
thing seriously either, yet they practised it knowing it was only a form and they weren't identified with it.

There's a dimension in us that has nothing to do with content. Self-realization is that I am not that. I'm not my story, not my grievances and hang-ups, not the story of me that I'm telling other people at parties or repeating in my head again and again. That is only form. It's temporary.

When you see what you're not, it's already liberating. Something inside you breathes a sigh of relief. Then, of course, the mind begins to ask, "What are you if you are not that?" It wants an answer. In other words, it wants some new form. It wants a new thought. There must be a thought that I am. But it doesn't work like that. That's why the great book the Tao Te Ching starts with the line that the Tao that can be spoken of is not the true Tao because Tao – in the ancient Chinese way of putting it – is the formless dimension. You could say pure consciousness, but with any term we use we have to be careful it's not mistaken for "It." Otherwise, the mind comes in and says, "Oh, consciousness, yes. I believe that I'm consciousness." It's not another belief. It's finding that spaciousness inside yourself that's there when you let go of identification of form.

Excerpted from **Just now: a two-part interview with Eckhart Tolle** by Joseph Roberts. Read the full interview online. Go to www.commonground.ca Click on archives. Click on 2007 at the top of the page. For part one, click on September 2007. For part two, click on October 2007.

Renew Your World



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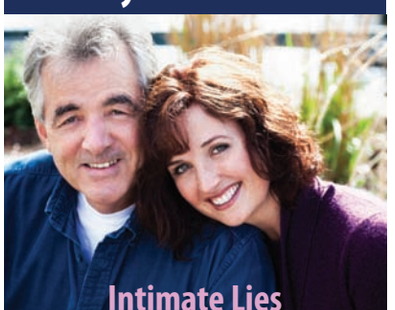

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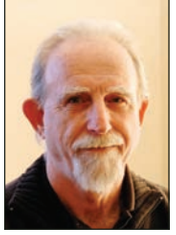

Mac McLaughlin

StarWise February 2012

IN SHAKESPEARE'S PLAY, Julius Caesar, Cassius explains the law of karma simply and accurately when he proclaims, "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings." According to the mystics, the whole world is a play made up by the karmic impressions stored in the mind of the people of the world. We know that karma represents the law of give and take, action and reaction. The familiar axiom, "As you sow, so shall you reap," is another attempt at explaining the laws of karma. The stars and planets are woven into the fabric of our beings. They are the representatives of karmic distribution in accordance to our give and take and make-and-break ledgers congealed and played out in the present incarnation. The beautiful people among us that seemingly have it easy, as they glide along life's path radiantly successful with great families, are experiencing the positive bounty of generous and good actions from previous lives. Conversely, the souls that performed negative, non-loving and violent activities come back into this life with severe karmic difficulties – not as a punishment, but to help them evolve spiritually.

Let's take a look at some of the karmic energies destined to unfold in the month of February. The ancients had the night sky to study and ponder. They noted different energies prevailed according to the star group or nakshatra the moon was moving through. From that, they could decipher what type of energy would befall mankind. The full moon on February

ARIES Mar 21 - Apr 19
Venus casts her lovely rays your way starting February 7. Along personal lines, she offers refinement, beautification and transformation. Love, affection and creative energies come along nicely. You may be surprised by the dynamic changes starting to happen in your life.

TAURUS Apr 20 - May 21
Bust a move or two. Sheesh, go for the whole enchilada. Do not waste this opportunity to truly make positive changes at work, home and especially within yourself. March and April are dynamic months as well. Make the best effort and it will pay.

GEMINI May 22 - Jun 20
News from afar, possibly regarding publishing or travel, comes your way. Your longing for the divine becomes enhanced. Career sector heats up towards the end of the month, as do considerations regarding home, family and real estate. Make ready for a big year.

CANCER Jun 21 - Jul 22
The full moon on February 7 prompts you to take a deep look at everything. You may be restless and casting about for some changes, especially career-wise. Secrets, inheritances and shared monies may be topics of interest throughout the month.

LEO Jul 23 - Aug 22
Relationships of all sorts come into consideration as the Leo full moon on February 7 takes hold. How you relate to others and how others relate to you is what it is about. Romantic energies are strong and you may be restless for some travel.

VIRGO Aug 23 - Sep 22
The month starts off in a good way with strong romantic and creative potential. Travel and higher education could be on your mind. Keep in mind a soft reply turns away wrath as Mercury and Mars clash on February 23.

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Mar. 22: Sheraton Guilford, 15269 104th Ave., Surrey, BC.

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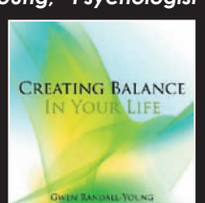

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7 takes place in the nakshatra called Ashlesha and from what I have studied this nakshatra really doesn't have a lot of positive connotations. Suspicion, paranoia, collusion, conspiracy and many other not so nice aphorisms seem to dominate the energy coming from this star group. We get to see the underbelly or nasty side of human behaviour. One writer says Ashlesha represents the power to inflict poison. Sharp, venomous attacks take place and many things are hidden and waiting to be discovered. Plus the moon is full and, no doubt, we will find out soon enough what it is all about.

The new moon on February 21 takes place in the early degrees of Pisces and is conjunct with Neptune. On the positive side of the coin, Pisces/Neptune energies convey wisdom, kindness, creativity and compassion. On the negative side of the ledger, we have distortion, deception, confusion, lies and misdirection to feast upon. A few days after the new moon, Mercury opposes Mars (February 23) and this is an indicator of unrest, anger and confrontation. Sabre rattling, nerve jangling threats and counter reactions will be the case; just name the place and let's see what unfolds. Neptune/Pisces energies rule over the seas and oceans and with all the tension going on in the Strait of Hormuz we can use our imaginations as to what will take place. Yes, we are in the belly of the beast whilst we travel the rocky road of the Kali Yuga. When the great saint Kabir stepped on to Earth, he discovered no one was happy. How can we be happy when we're so disconnected from our higher self? Not to despair, we are on our way home. Love will come our way when our hearts can no longer stand the cruel suffering. A change of heart is needed. The mystics teach us love is the only commodity that increases when given; all other types of giving lead to depletion.

LIBRA Sep 23 - Oct 22
Your solar fifth sector ruling business, romance, entertainment and children is strongly activated in the first 20 days of the month. After that, your instincts drive you toward perfection, harmony and balance, starting with your body. It is time for some early spring cleaning.

SCORPIO Oct 23 - Nov 21
Jupiter casts his glance bringing abundance and good timing. Your creative imagination goes into high gear, especially after February 19. Pay attention to your dreams as they may hold significant information and inspiration. Confused issues surface mid-month and may need delicate handling.

SAGITTARIUS Nov 22 - Dec 21
Mars heats up your career sector throughout the month bringing action and challenge. It might be time for a job change. Home, family and real estate activities increase as well. Creative, artistic and romantic energies create happy and memorable times.

CAPRICORN Dec 22 - Jan 19
Lord Saturn sits at the top of your solar chart for most of the year bringing opportunities for advancement and success. Honours and accolades for those that rightly used power and a fall from a high place for those that abused positions of authority.

AQUARIUS Jan 20 - Feb 19
You are in your solar high of the year. It means you can become empowered, acknowledged, directed, respected and, of course, loved. No time to ponder, but it is time for action. The full moon on February 7 brings it all home.

PISCES Feb 20 - Mar 20
Keep a diary by your bed and record your dreams, as they should be flooding in strongly in the last 10 days of the month. You may feel inspired and ready to make all kinds of unique and dynamic changes that are long overdue.

Mac McLaughlin has been a practising, professional astrologer for more than four decades. His popular **Straight Stars** column ran in Vancouver's largest weekly newspaper for 11 years. Email mac@macsstars.com or call 604-731-1109

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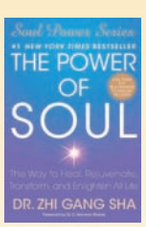

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Open-hearted communication

Imagine a kindergarten class about to have "show and tell." Every student in the class has a hand up because each wants to be the first to have a turn. When one finally goes first, a few pay attention, but many are thinking about what they will say when it is their turn. Others are just waiting for the speaker to finish.

When the speaker is done and the teacher tells the class they may now ask questions of the speaker, invariably some students will ignore what the speaker said and rather than ask a question, they simply tell a story of their own. Basically everyone wants to talk and no one wants to listen. Well this is kindergarten, after all, and people that age are expected to be ego-driven.

Many adult conversations, however, especially disagreements, seem to be

Having meaningful, positive communication is not so much about how we talk, but about who we are.

conducted much like our kindergarten students. Each is arguing their point or position. Rather than really listening to what the other is saying, those comments are used as a jumping-off point to further elaborate upon what was already said. Rather than a real conversation, the discussion is a battle to try to get the other to see things our way and change their mind. No wonder so many couples say they have communication problems.

The word "communication" comes from the root "commune," which means to be in a state of intimate, heightened sensitivity and receptivity. This would imply a level of closeness and being very open and sensitive not only to the words, but to the intent and the feelings of the other. Being receptive is defined as: able or inclined to receive; especially: open and responsive to ideas, impressions or suggestions.

Thus, to truly communicate, we would need to be both sensitive and receptive to the other person. I would suggest that sensitivity and receptivity are higher-level qualities that need to be developed.

Of course, this also describes the ego energy that is often carried into adulthood. Growing up is not synonymous with being evolved. We live in an ego-based culture and one really does need to transcend the values and ways of the culture and often the family of origin to move forward.

We call people heroes when they go out of the way and perhaps even face danger to help another. There are some cultures where this is so common and expected that it is not seen as anything particularly unusual. Mother Teresa was a model of compassion and unconditional loving. There are countless less famous people who spend their lives listening, learning and understanding the needs of those who are suffering.

These are people with very open hearts. There is no ego involved here. They only want to help and desire no recognition. These examples may be on the extreme end of the compassion scale, but the principle of open-heartedness is the same whether we are building a hospital or building a relationship.

It is hard to talk to someone who is not open hearted about sensitivity and receptivity. Having meaningful, positive communication is not so much about how we talk, but about who we are.

For communication to be different, *we* need to be different. It is not, however, about changing the other person, but striving to change ourselves.

Gwen Randall-Young is an author and psychotherapist in private practice. For articles and information about her books, CDs and the new "Creating Healthy Relationships" series, visit www.gwen.ca See display ad this issue.

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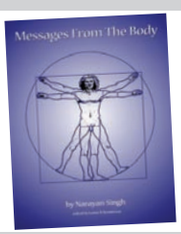

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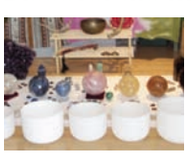

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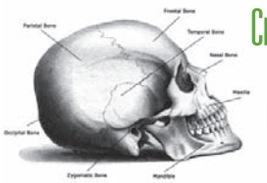

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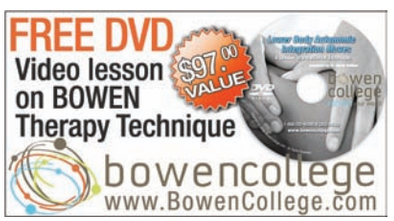

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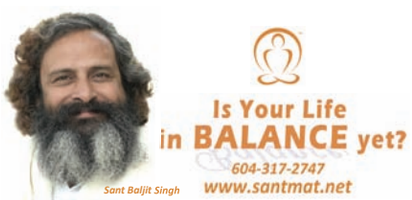
~ H.H. Sant Rajinder Singh Ji Maharaj



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LETTERS

…continued from pg. 14

logical agenda." He went on to say "there may be a need for legislation" that many believe would harm charities in Canada.

While the government claims its issue with ForestEthics is that we use US (and Canadian) funding to affect Canadian policy, we know what's really going on. Our work to stop the toxic Northern Gateway Pipeline and Tanker project is hitting a nerve. Thousands of Canadians with real concerns about the threats posed by oil spills are speaking out. And with over $20 billion in foreign money flowing in to support Tar Sands development, the Harper government doesn't want to hear our opposition.

We don't have billions of dollars to sway government opinion. But we do have hundreds of thousands of people invested in a clean, safe place for us to live. If you haven't submitted a written public comment to the Joint Review Panel yet, please do it now at http://salsa.democracyinaction.org If you have submitted a comment, please forward this message to your friends and ask them to join in. Listen to voices speaking out against Enbridge in Kitimat where JRP hearings started at http://salsa.democracyinaction.org Some comments were so powerful I was moved to tears.

There's nothing "radical" about people like us wanting a say in key government decisions. And the more people who stand up, the harder it will be to discount our voices. Your help has been instrumental in making toxic Tar Sands oil a national issue. The upcoming fight is going to be intense, especially with President Obama's recent rejection of the Keystone XL Pipeline. Thank you for standing with ForestEthics.

– Nikki Skuce,
Senior Energy Campaigner, ForestEthics,
www.forestethics.org

International Year of Co-operatives launch makes history

January 12 was a historic day in the history of the Canadian co-operative movement. More than 1,200 co-operators across Canada gathered in their communities to launch the International Year of Co-operatives. The launch took place in 14 cities across Canada and many other communities held their own simultaneous launches. The UN General Assembly has placed a global importance on the co-operative business model and this year offers opportunities for organizations in Canada and throughout the world to share the benefits of co-operatives.

– Canadian Co-operative Association
www.coopscanada.coop

Fukushima fallout understated

I have said the situation in Japan was probably much worse than we were being told. It seems I was right. What can we do to protect ourselves? The answer is not much. Moving to the southern hemisphere is about the best option. This is because the atmospheres of the northern and southern hemispheres mix relatively slowly. Some, but not all, of the radioactive material injected into the atmosphere from an event in the northern hemisphere will have decayed before it reaches the southern hemisphere. The best option is not to have any nuclear reactors anywhere on Earth, except perhaps for a couple for producing radioisotopes used in medicine that cannot readily be produced any other way. It seems Germany and Japan are starting down this path. Getting every country to do so will be an enormous challenge. The fundamental problem with Fukushima-Daiichi was the loss of electrical power to keep the cooling operating; you may be sure the nuclear power companies are busy designing systems with the idea they will assure us this cannot happen again. Don't believe it.

There is also much concern about the used fuel in reactor #4. If the structure holding it fails for any reason there will be a big disaster as this fuel will overheat, burn and disperse radioactive material wherever the wind takes it. A year or two ago I went to a talk about nuclear reactors, during which we were told that the used fuel storage was on top of the reactors. I frankly did not believe it as I could not believe anyone would do something so stupid. Well it seems some people, i.e. those in General Electric, were so stupid.

The nuclear non-proliferation treaty showed us what happens when the politicians take charge. The Americans have not done what they promised in the treaty, and others likewise. The Canadian government decided to provide nuclear technology to India even though it has not signed the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. Earlier, India violated the conditions placed on it when Canada provided it with a Candu reactor by using it to produce plutonium for a bomb. A benefit of having no reactors is that no plutonium-239 is created for making atomic bombs. This is in itself an imperative reason for not having any nuclear reactors. Another benefit is no radioactive matter would be added to our environment. Presently, this happens. For instance, the plan by Bruce Power to ship used steam generators to Sweden for recycling will, if it goes ahead, result in radioactively contaminated steel in general circulation.

I recommend Paul McKay's article *Atomic Accomplice* for Canada's role in all this.
See www.paulmckay.com
– Dave Huntley

Cholesterol the unknown healer

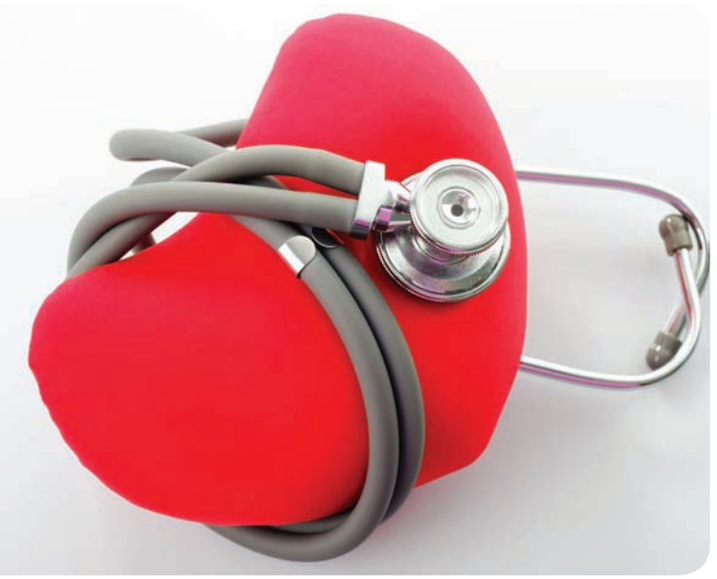

photo © Oksix

by Allan Lawry

If you think 'bad' or 'high' cholesterol contributes to heart disease, you have been deceived by the marketers of a mythical disease. The so-called 'bad' or LDL cholesterol is actually part of a natural healing process designed for repairing damaged arteries in your body. This damage is usually caused by inflammation and oxidation. Oxidation causes nicks and cuts on the inside of the walls of the arteries and causes inflammation, similar to a cut on the outside of your skin. This sets the process of healing in motion. LDL cholesterol has many purposes, including assisting in the healing process by forming a waxy "scab" over the cuts that still allows blood to flow smoothly. Often called plaque, this scab gives the arterial walls protection and time to heal from within. It is up to us to provide the correct ingredients for the initial healing process and to create healthy arteries for a lifetime.

Understand the cholesterol myths

Many studies show that people with high cholesterol live longer and have fewer heart conditions than those with low cholesterol and that high cholesterol does not predict all causes of mortality. Studies also show if you eat fatty foods that contain high levels of cholesterol, it has little or no effect on changes to blood cholesterol levels. There is no reason to describe it as being high or low, good or bad, as explained by Ron Rosedale, MD: "Notice please that LDL and HDL are lipoproteins which are fats combined with proteins. There is only one cholesterol. There is no such thing as 'good' or 'bad' cholesterol, there is just cholesterol."

Years ago, mainstream medicine noticed 'bad' LDL cholesterol showed up in higher amounts with people who had various heart conditions. Thinking this was one of the causes of the problems, they hypothesized that high LDL levels in the blood was a major risk factor for heart conditions. They did not do their homework and did not realize that LDL shows up to patch the holes and cracks inside the arterial walls. It has since been found that those who proposed the lowering of LDL levels were being paid by the drug companies that produce the cholesterol lowering drugs. In my 30 years as a healthy living coach, I have seen the level lowered three times by these so-called 'experts.'

Dr. Uffe Ravnskov (MD, PhD) is a leading cholesterol researcher who was recently asked, "If the cholesterol hypothesis is an error, does this mean that all therapies, low cholesterol diets, cholesterol lowering therapies, and medications are wrong?" His response: "Absolutely, this kind of treatment is meaningless, costly and has transformed millions of healthy people into patients."

The most common drugs currently prescribed for 'high cholesterol' are called statins and they represent a $29-billion-dollar business worldwide. They work by inhibiting an enzyme in the liver that manufactures cholesterol. The medical claim that lowering LDL is beneficial in fighting cardiovascular disease (CVD) is totally contradictory to all the research and results that we have seen for the past 10 years. It is not in your best interest to lower your cholesterol levels.

It is important to understand cholesterol is a very necessary and valuable substance for living a healthy life. It is vital for transporting the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K. Cholesterol is necessary in forming brain synapses and it helps to form all sex hormones valuable for a healthy sex life.

To prevent potential CVD, it is essential to lower your exposure to oxidation and inflammation. I suggest a natural, preferably raw and alkaline diet and the avoidance of all refined carbohydrates, refined plant oils and artificial sweeteners. Get plenty of fresh air, exercise and Vitamin D from sunshine. Check in with your primary care provider if you are concerned with your levels of intravascular stress (IVS). Procedures include biomarker tests for elevated C-reactive protein, homocysteine, insulin, glucose and acidosis.

The next time you see or hear an advertisement for 'lowering your cholesterol,' please be aware of the marketing game that is in effect and realize you do not need to buy into their game; your health is more important. I wish you all the best in your quest for a healthier life.

Avoid these fats

Research has shown that, rather than avoiding the so called 'bad fatty cholesterol,' one should avoid the following fats: foods fried in vegetable oils, all hydrogenated oils, refined or processed oils, margarine, trans-fats, and any oil that has been overheated. These fats turn rancid and oxidize in the body. This can cause excess free radical production, which can cause internal inflammation. Inflammation causes a cascade of problems including the oxidation of LDL cholesterol, a precursor to arterial damage and heart problems such as angina and coronary blockages (heart attacks).

Allan Lawry is a lifestyle and fitness coach in Vancouver, 604-220-7188, info@alfitness.ca, www.alfitness.ca

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Northern Gateway money vs environment

The battle lines are drawn and Northern BC's pristine wilderness is the latest front. With hearings underway into the proposed $5.5-billion, dual 1,172-kilometre Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline project to transport bitumen from the Alberta tar sands to Kitimat and imported condensate to dilute it from the coast back to Alberta, the fossil fuel industry and its supporters have stepped up the rhetoric. Environmentalists and people in towns, rural areas and First Nations communities in BC have lined up in opposition.

It's not just about potential damage from an oil spill… The larger issues are about our continued reliance on polluting fossil fuels and the economic impact of rapidly exploiting and selling our resources and resource industries.

It's about Canada's national interest. With lax royalty structures and massive subsidies to the fossil fuel industry, not to mention foreign ownership of tar sands operations and lobbying by foreign companies, Canadians are not enjoying the real benefits of our oil industry. In fact, increasing reliance on the tar sands is hurting other sectors of the economy, manufacturing in particular.

Thanks to the government's support of the fossil fuel industry, ours is a petro dollar that rises and falls with the price of oil. The high price of oil has increased our dollar's value and that has hurt the more labour-intensive manufacturing sector, which relies on exports. Not only have hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs been lost over the past few years, but Canada has also been missing out on opportunities to join the boom in production of renewable-energy technology.

Industry adherents have come up with many arguments supporting the Northern Gateway project. Some have more holes than an oilfield. Take the jobs argument. Even Enbridge admits that most would be in short-term construction work. Only about 35 to 40 long-term jobs would be created at the Kitimat marine terminal.

Most economic benefits from increased tar sands production would go to the companies and their shareholders, including firms from the US, Korea and China. In fact, state-owned PetroChina, which already operates in the tar sands, has just bought 100 percent of the MacKay River project.

The "ethical oil" argument is so absurd as to be hardly worth mentioning, but it's one the government has latched on to. Oil can't be ethical or unethical. People, and by extension the companies they own and operate or the governments they represent, can behave in ethical or unethical ways, but a product can't.

The Northern Gateway project and much of the recent and pending tar sands expansion will help companies owned by the government of China dig up the bitumen and send it there for refining and use. The ethical oil folks admit China is a police state, so why do they support selling them our industry and resources? The anti-American conspiracy theories are even more absurd. Saying that opposition to the Northern Gateway is a plot by US funding agencies to protect America's access to Canadian oil is just idiotic.

The only real argument for Northern Gateway is that it will increase profits for the oil industry and hand over more of our resources and the associated profits and jobs to China. The arguments against it are so numerous we've barely touched them here.

Written with contributions from David Suzuki Foundation editorial and communications specialist **Ian Hanington**. Learn more at www.davidsuzuki.org

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FEATURE

Money, meaning & mayhem

A memorable book about money sparks memories of an in-flight conversation

source photos: dollars © FengYu; Lima shanty town © Laser143

Back in 1998, I was sitting on a plane at Heathrow airport, thumbing through a volume on finance I had picked up in a London bookshop. It wasn't my usual area of interest, but the title caught my eye: *Frozen Desire: An Inquiry Into the Meaning of Money.*

This nonfiction work by former *Financial Times* writer James Buchan turned out to be an appropriate choice for in-flight reading. As the jet began to taxi onto the runway, a white-haired man in the seat next to me struck up a conversation. Let's call him Ted. "I always fly coach even though I can afford first class," Ted said. A resident of the Lower Mainland, he described his boat, his travels and his post-retirement consulting work, which involved buying up companies around the globe and "making them more profitable" by taking them apart.

Ted's job was to identify functioning companies that were worth more to investors in pieces. This meant outsourcing, downsizing and smashing pension funds like kids' piggy banks. Although the tern "vulture capitalism" was not in currency at the time, Ted sounded like one of the carrion feeders. Essentially, he was in the same kind of business, at the same time, as Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, who's been taking heat for his "disaster capitalism" tenure at Bain Capital.

With a wry smile, Ted told me he hadn't paid taxes in Canada in 18 years. He said he directed most of his money into offshore investments, but Revenue Canada eventually took note of the gap between his living standards and his tax statements and audited him. The case went to court where Ted protested his innocence. "But you pay no taxes!" replied the judge, who released him after finding no technical violations of any laws.

From one angle, this amiable guy was simply a rational actor in the booming, Clinton-era market. Adam Smith's invisible hand was guiding his money to a safer berth while he played *Where's Waldo* with Revenue Canada. From another angle (mine), Ted was a corporate welfare cheat. By the late nineties, the de-industrialization and financialization of the western economy was in progress and this character was playing his bit part by wrecking functioning companies for profit. I was alternately fascinated and repelled by my airline companion's remarks and eventually the conversation petered out, replaced with the muffled howl of wind rushing against the fuselage. I returned to my salted peanuts and Buchan's book.

THE Stephen Hawkings and Niall Fergusons of the publishing world are rare and Buchan is not among them. Nonfiction studies of deep topics don't usually fly off the shelves and in spite of some stellar reviews in 1997 for *Frozen Desire*, it had about as much impact as a Post-It note dropped into the Grand Canyon. Yet the lucid and luminous volume deserves a wider audience, especially now that money has come to dominate every sphere of human experience from the boardroom to the bedroom.

Most writers and thinkers on the left limit their criticism of money to its allocation, rather than its nature. Buchan isn't concerned about who gets how big a slice of pie; he questions the pie itself and the oven it was baked in. In his mix of memoir and historical survey, he identifies money as "frozen desire," an abstract representation of human wishes that sheds old forms to take on new ones, from cowrie shells to precious metals to various kinds of surrogate money such as bill of exchange, local cheques, marketable securities and certificates of deposit, municipal bonds, annuities and derivatives.

Buchan is the Eton-educated son of William Buchan, 3rd Baron Tweedsmuir. According to a Wikipedia entry for the author, in 1986 he married Lady Evelyn Rose Phipps, daughter of Oswald Phipps, 4th Marquess of Normanby. A novelist and former contributor to the *Financial Times*, Buchan is that rare bird, a blueblood conservative that has lost faith in money even though he doesn't lack for it. He sees the market as a false idol and this golden calf – or bronze bull if you prefer – is cut with fool's gold. (Buchan's musings are supported by the investigations of anthropologist David Graeber. In his 2011 book, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years,* Graeber determines that money did not have its beginnings as a replacement for barter, but mostly as a means of transacting the business of slavery and war.)

In the 1970s, at the height of the Arab oil embargo, Buchan's career as a business reporter took him to a sweltering outpost in Jordan. His status as a writer grew along with his savings and in an illuminating moment he recognized how interest-bearing investments can overtake an hourly wage. "The money... began to breed, first slowly, then convulsively. While I slept, or was drunk, or made love, or smoked a Dunhill on the porch, my money worked; and far as I could tell, with smaller effort and for greater reward than I did."

Like most of us, the author's feelings about money are mixed, although you can probably guess what side of the delight/disgust side of the spectrum he's on. From the photograph on the dust jacket of *Frozen Desire,* it seems as if the photographer had just held something foul under Buchan's nose. The stench has a long pedigree. Most of the world religions nurse a deep

ambivalence about money and credit. For centuries, the Catholic Church made usury a crime and, to this day, Islamic banks strictly limit interest. In the *New Testament*, Jesus recognizes money as a competitive authority, with the understanding that "in embodying happiness and reward in tangible, earthly form, money is more impressively heaven than heaven."

In the *New Testament*, Christ's birth in Bethlehem was presided over by the gift economy, with the Three Wise Men bearing gold, Frankincense and Myrrh. His death was sealed by the money economy, in the form of 30 pieces of silver the Romans paid to the turncoat apostle Judas.

Jesus is also remembered in the Gospels for kicking over the moneychangers' tables in the temple. While the author is not explicitly endorsing religion over secularism, he insists the Biblical tale of market-mediated crucifixion anticipates the effect of capital on cultures of the west. Money can stand in for human relations as a substitute for trust in people. "It will displace trust in all human relations except those of the inner family," Buchan writes, summing up the problem in one memorable sentence: "Money enters into the system of values, and then displaces all other values like the cuckoo's egg in a nest.

"For some time, in many places, money was thought to be bad, but it is now thought, on the whole, to be good. That inversion is the greatest to have occurred in the moral sentiments of the West. Desires that resisted incorporation into money turned pale and lost their power to convince: disinterested friendship, love and philanthropy became as suspect as the goals of once passionate wishes, honour and salvation. Miserliness, which places potential above actual gratification, had once seemed the disease of money… gradually, it lost its pathology and became the condition of moral health."

From the Enlightenment on, as the lure of filthy lucre mated with technical advances in communication and printing, money became the yardstick for all that is good and true. "Only money would measure success or failure, happiness or misery. Only money could reward or punish. States and governments must just stand back and money – which reconciles all clashes of human will – would see us right," Buchan notes.

The identification of the almighty dollar with the imperial ego came to fruition in the eighties, during the reign of Reagan, Mulroney and Thatcher and the latter's TINA doctrine ("There is No Alternative"). The Iron Lady's parallel dictum, "There is no such thing as society," served as both as a 'Dear John' letter to the public sector and a greeting card to Moloch. By the time I was 30,000 feet above the Atlantic reading *Frozen Desire* for the first time, the game was well underway in the AngloAmerican world: socialism for the rich and capitalism for everyone else. One year after my return from London, President Bill Clinton would sign away the firewall between commercial and investment banks, the Glass-Steagall Act, freeing Wall Street robber barons for even greater plunder.

In a world governed by money, private vices are reinterpreted as public virtues "and the old private virtues – prudence, thrift, kindness – become public vices in the market economy." For Buchan, this is the great sadness at the heart of our civilization: that "by using money, we convert our world into it."

That conversion is ongoing. In the 2003 film *The Corporation*, former Fraser Institute chairman Michael Walker enthused about a future where there is a sticker price on everything, down to every stream and rock on the planet. A mere nine years later, the fever dream of privatizers and profiteers is turning into a waking nightmare for the planet. With the growing global market in carbon credits, financial institutions have partnered with governments and captured environmental groups to put a price on the very air we breathe.

When Buchan's book was first released, the financial elite still concealed their deepest desires and darkest doings in coded language. No longer. "Plutocracy" is a word that means rule by the rich and in 2005 Citigroup coined a variation of it with the term "plutonomy." This shiny, new term, minted in the bowels of a megabank, refers to a system in which the rich side with government to ensure the continued domination of their class. The following year Citigroup decided to bang the drum for the elite by releasing an "equity strategy" for investors entitled "Revisiting Plutonomy: The Rich Getting Richer." Among the quotes from this document is this giveaway: "...the top 10%, particularly the top 1% of the US – the plutonomists in our parlance – have benefited disproportionately from the recent productivity surge in the US... from globalization and the productivity boom, at the relative expense of labour." Karl Marx couldn't have put it any better.

"By the time I was 30,000 feet above the Atlantic reading Frozen Desire for the first time, the game was well underway in the Anglo-American world: socialism for the rich and capitalism for everyone else."

This brings me back to Ted. It seemed he regarded Canada as little more than a country club with acceptable green fees and moorage, but lacking a place to properly stash his cash. "The IMF almost shut down Canada last year," he told me with a look of shared confidence, suggesting the country was close to being taken apart like a bankrupt sawmill. The irony was thicker than the mystery-meat of my in-flight meal. Whatever the merit of his IMF anecdote, he had no interest in making the connection between his own sociopathic behaviour and the nation's solvency.

Since my first and last acquaintance with this high-flying plutonomist, the world of finance has become more invasive into our daily lives even as its practices have become more nakedly criminal and the philanthropy of business titans more desperately public. My airline companion's sentiments are, arguably, now even closer in line with the values of Wall Street and Bay Street.

Of course, the reader might object that Ted's tax evasion could have been reigned in by tighter regulation. Straighten out the loopholes and plug any gaps that sociopaths can wriggle through and we will have the revenue necessary to fund our dwindling social programs. Even if North American leaders were willing and able to back-engineer accountability, I imagine Buchan would applaud the idea in one sentence and condemn it as a halfway measure in the next. He sees the problem in capital itself, or at least its current form, that favours the plutocrats over the rest of the populace. At the very least, money talks and those with the most of it have the biggest megaphone. Strangely, *Frozen Desire* does not address the most problematic form of money – fiat currency, which can be printed on demand and leveraged to insane levels.

Five years after Citigroup's scented letter to its investors, the one percent/ninety-nine percent has gone from a political slogan to a placard-scrawled cliché. By November of last year, the streets of New York, Athens, Santiago, Vancouver and hundreds of other cities across the world filled with millions of protestors against the criminality of unregulated finance. Plutonomy is on the move across the globe and rising awareness of its social costs is on the move with it.

Today, money utterly dominates politics, social policy and the media. We may rail against the commodification of our lives, yet money remains the measure of all things, whether it's in the mirrored canyons of the world's financial districts or in the poorest shantytowns of the developing world. "And that is precisely why the untrammelled pursuit of money is imprudent: one does not issue handguns to the inmates of overly crowded prisons. We need to break the compulsory nature of money and make possible a future in which we are not at permanent war with nature and one another," Buchan observes.

In all my wanderings across the great cities of the world and all my myopic scans across acres of newsprint and vellum, I've come to appreciate the need for forms of social organization that aren't governed by the whims of fiat currency. The Occupy movement was and is, I believe, a rough draft of more humane social arrangements. We are not talking about just a protest movement, but also an eruption of a communal desire to honour human values that extend beyond the "frozen desire" of precious metals and their surrogates. This is hardly a pipe dream. Canada alone is home to thousands of cooperatives, including credit unions, which serve purposes other than the sole pursuit of profit.

Buchan himself believes money will eventually fail us, as it failed others so many times in the past, from the tulip bulbs of 17th century Holland to the German Marks of the Weimar Republic in the 1920s and beyond. The dreams of high finance will eventually dissolve, he insists, and "The Age of Money, which came after the Age of Faith, will itself draw, as all things under the sun, to an end." What the author imagines will replace it, he does not say.

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Going underground

There have been many movies about the Holocaust. So much so there is a fear that filmmakers' constant re-framing and re-imagining of it undermines and clouds the awful history they seek to convey. However, for Polish director Agnieszka Holland, there is still a sense the "main mystery" surrounding why humans behaved as they did has still not been fully explored.

Holland is perhaps best known for *Europa Europa,* her film about a boy who conceals he is Jewish by joining the Hitler Youth. Her latest film, *In Darkness*, focuses on a group of Jews from many backgrounds who hid out for 14 months in the sewers to escape the liquidation of the ghetto in Lvov in Poland.

Agnieszka Holland, *In Darkness* director. Photo by Krzysztof Opalinski.

The script, written by David F. Shamoon, derives from a true story taken from Robert Marshall's book *In the Sewers of Lvov*. It follows Leopold Socha – popular Polish actor Robert Wieckiewicz – a sewer worker and thief who agrees to hide the group after they offer him significantly more money than the Nazis' bounty on Jews. What starts off as an opportunist business arrangement becomes something deeper and more dangerous for Socha and his family as he discovers his humanitarian side.

Critics have praised the film for its vivid recreation of the squalid conditions in the sewer, compared to life above ground, leaving the audience wanting to come up for air by the end. The ordeal in the dark, dank conditions also reveals the strains and clashes of the clearly flawed individuals within the group as they struggle to survive. It also aptly shows the social diversity of the time, with people speaking Polish, German, Yiddish and Ukrainian.

How much Holland's film – Poland's foreign language entry for the 2012 Oscars – sheds light on the dark "mystery" that caused humans to behave so hideously towards one another is sure to be a talking point, while offering a dramatic and ultimately heart-warming take on the Second World War experience.

Steven Soderbergh's latest, *Haywire* (out now), has no pretensions to great art although the two-dimensional thriller with a kick-ass female might lend it a feminist spin. Soderbergh is clearly having fun with the action genre, with trademark long shots and limited use of music. The film is short on emotional backstory: an ex-marine working for a private company in special ops finds herself the target of an elaborate and deadly plot. Gina Carano, playing the curvaceous heroine, gives a frustratingly inscrutable performance, but her experience as a mixed martial arts champ makes her a thoroughly credible action figure as she dispatches the bad guys.

Angelina Jolie, action woman on-screen and off (in her role as UN Goodwill Ambassador), makes her directorial debut *In the Land of Blood and Honey*, set in war-torn 1980s Bosnia. Graphic in its depiction of the horrors of war and ethnic cleansing, the ambitious debut has had a mixed critical reception.

Having hung up his wand, *Harry Potter* star Daniel Ratcliffe graduates to gothic horror in *The Woman in Black* (out February 3). Set in the early 1900s, Ratcliffe plays a lawyer who, while working on a deceased client's papers in a remote mansion, begins to see a mysterious woman dressed only in black and uncovers tragic secrets about the local village.

Robert Alstead writes at www.2020Vancouver.com

...*Wheat Board* *from pg. 5*

ings between Mulroney and Schreiber pertaining to matters of legitimate "public interest" and not covered in other inquiries. Harper appointed Justice Oliphant to conduct the inquiry.

Justice Oliphant followed the Schreiber-Mulroney money trail on pasta and wrote: "I have concluded that, whatever Mr. Mulroney did respecting Mr. Schreiber's pasta business, it was not done as part of the mandate he received from Mr. Schreiber on August 27, 1993. Any work done by Mr. Mulroney in respect of the pasta business was done on behalf of his friend and former colleague Mr. [Elmer] MacKay, as well as a friend of Mr. MacKay's who was involved with Mr. Schreiber in the pasta business." (Page 233, Chapter 6: The Agreement, Oliphant Commission Report, May 2010.) (*Editor's note: Elmer MacKay is the father of Peter MacKay, our current Minister of National Defence.*)

Within days of the conclusion of the Commission, the Harper government ordered the extradition of Mr. Schreiber, over his objections, to Germany where he disappeared into the penal system.

Mr. Harper and the NCC's obsession with pasta and where the NCC got the funding to spend so freely on its attacks on the CWB never became an issue before the Oliphant commission and remain a mystery to this day.

During the bi-annual CWB Directors' Elections, private trade-friendly farmers were encouraged to seek Directorships on the Wheat Board, but farmers consistently rejected such candidates, at least in part thanks to the preferential balloting system. Using that system, farmer-voters are able to rank candidates from first to last. On a preferential ballot, if a voter's first preference of candidate loses, the voter's second choice comes into effect. This system ensures that, in elections with multiple candidates, no vote preferences are lost and the winner must have secured 50% plus one to win. Over the years, some contests have been simple two-person elections, but even in those cases, CWB single-desk supporters usually won.

Today, Steven Harper is the Prime Minister and on December 15, 2011, the Conservative- dominated Senate passed Bill C-18, legislation ending the Canadian Wheat Board single-desk and dismissing its farmer-elected directors. The Harper-appointed Governor General gave it Royal Assent the same day.

These actions were done in spite of a ruling by Federal court judge, the Honourable Douglas Campbell, that Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz had broken the law by introducing legislation to gut the Canadian Wheat Board without consulting the farmer-elected Board of Directors and holding a fair vote among farmers to determine their wishes on the fate of the organization that they owned, controlled and paid for as the law stipulated.

With the passage of Bill C-18, Canadians have a Prime Minister who contends that following the law is optional for his government. Judge Campbell called this "an affront to the rule of law." There have only been three times since the repatriation of the Constitution in 1982 when a government has implemented legislation the courts have determined is illegal; all three occurred under the Harper Conservatives.

On December 14, in an act of courage and integrity, the farmer-elected directors of the Canadian Wheat Board held a news conference in Winnipeg, announcing they would be challenging Harper's arbitrary and unlawful use of executive power and would ask the courts to make the Harper regime follow the law. Since C-18 removed them from their elected positions, the elected-directors brought the challenge forward as individuals.

This news conference was reminiscent of another historic news conference held decades ago in Alberta. In 1929, a group of women, prominent among them Irene Parlby, a farmwoman from Didsbury, Alberta, announced they had successfully used the courts to establish that women were persons under the law. This established the basis for our modern system of individual rights. These women were heavily supported by the western farm community and Mrs. Parlby, as a Cabinet Minister in the United Farmers of Alberta government, had its full support.

Like the above-mentioned case, the results of the farmers' challenge to C-18 will set the course for the future of Canadian democracy. By ignoring Judge Campbell's ruling and implementing Bill C-18, Prime Minister Harper and his government have shown disdain for the rule of law. This is not how Canadian democracy should function. In his ruling, Judge Campbell quoted Chief Justice Fraser who wrote: "The detrimental consequences of the executive branch of government defining for itself – and by itself – the scope of its lawful power have been revealed, often bloodily, in the tumult of history."

Farmers from western Canada are now fighting a battle by standing up for Canada's traditions of community action, democracy and the rule of law. Court cases on this matter will be ongoing in 2012 and farmers could use your financial and moral support.

Donations for this critical court case may be made:

– To Friends of the CWB online at http://friendsofcwb.ca/j/donate

– Cheques may be mailed to The Friends of the CWB, P.O. Box 41, Brookdale, MB, R0K 0G0. – Donations may also be sent to the Canadian Wheat Board Alliance, Box 125, Hussar, AB, T0J 1S0. Please make cheques payable to Canadian Wheat Board Alliance, noting it is for court challenges. There is also a paypal donation button at www.cwbafacts.ca/donate/

For more information, see cwbafacts.ca. Ken Larsen runs a commercial-scale farm west of Red Deer, Alberta, using organic principles to grow barley, non-GM canola and forage crops. A long- time farm activist, he has participated in most of the major farm policy debates in western Canada over the past 25 years. He has numerous publications and articles to his credit and is an occasional commentator on CBC radio. He helped to found the Canadian Wheat Board Alliance.

The Alliance is a politically non-partisan organization of several hundred farmers focused specifically on the Canadian Wheat Board. Members of the Alliance recognize the advantages the Board brings to producers through the single-desk and price pooling, quality assurance through the Canadian Grain Commission (CGC), as well as the important role the CWB plays as an advocate for farmers in transportation, producer cars and on the world stage in trade disputes and negotiations. The Alliance draws memberships throughout the west.

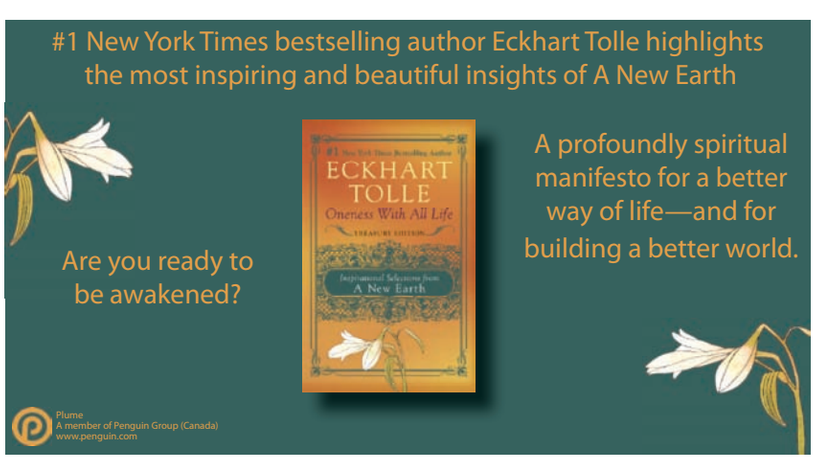
On December 15, 2011, the Conservative- dominated Senate passed Bill C-18, legislation ending the Canadian Wheat Board single-desk and dismissing its farmer-elected directors. The Harper-appointed Governor General gave it Royal Assent the same day.

Footnotes:

1. Lieber, James B. *Rats in the Grain – The Dirty Tricks and Trials of Archer Daniels Midland*. Four Walls Eight Windows Publishing: New York, 2000.

2. Eichenwald, Kurt. *The Informant*. Broadway Books: New York, 2000.

3. Johnston wrote: "These are concerns about the integrity of high-level government officials. The key issue is the relationship between Mr. Mulroney and Mr. Schreiber that led to cash payments. An inquiry should not be a wide-ranging review of Airbus, Eurocopter, the Bear Head Project or any of Mr. Schreiber's other dealings." (Page 22, Report *of the Independent Advisor into the Allegations Respecting Financial Dealings Between Mr. Karlheinz Schreiber and the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney*, David Johnston, January 2008)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Legendary impresario David Y.H. Lui was working on bringing Alicia Alonso's company to Vancouver when he passed away last September.

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